



NEWS

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U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE AND PARTNERS LAUD COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS AND CONSERVATION PROFESSIONALS

Volunteers, wildlife managers, and other professionals received nationwide recognition from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its conservation partners during a March 21 ceremony and reception at the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Orlando, Florida.

"This awards ceremony gives the Service and some of its key partners a unique opportunity to say congratulations and thank you to the folks out there on the ground who really make conservation happen," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "These awards represent the dedication of many Americans who help the Service play an integral role in creating a bright future for the Nation's wildlife."

Migratory Bird Hazards Reduced, Thanks to Lubbock, Texas, FWS Employee

Robert C. Lee, a Service special agent in Lubbock, Texas, received the 1998 Guy Bradley Award, which recognizes outstanding law enforcement contributions to conservation.

Lee was instrumental in devising and implementing solutions to law enforcement problems involving environmental hazards that kill migratory birds and harm other wildlife. In 1987, he investigated migratory bird mortality caused by the birds' contact with open petroleum pits, ponds, and tanks used in oil and gas production in west Texas.

In addition, he spearheaded an effort in the Southwest to promote the use of nets, screens, and other coverings for oil field pits and tanks to keep migratory birds out of these hazards. His outreach efforts ultimately prompted oil and gas regulatory agencies in Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico to establish new rules that require nets to be placed over open oil field pits and tanks.

The Guy Bradley Award was established in 1988 by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in Washington, DC. The award is given in the name of the first conservation law officer believed to have been killed in the line of duty.

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Refuge System Employees, Volunteers Lauded for Dedication,
Innovation

Three individuals and a volunteer group were recognized for their exceptional contributions to the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Jay Bellinger, manager of Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska and a 31-year Fish and Wildlife Service employee, received the Refuge Manager of the Year Award, also known as the Paul Kroegel Award.

With support from several conservation partners, Bellinger helped negotiate the largest purchase of refuge inholdings in the history of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Bellinger helped the Service obtain 210,000 acres for the refuge from willing sellers from the Old Harbor Native Corporation, an umbrella group to the largest native village within refuge boundaries. The purchased lands provide vital habitat for Kodiak brown bears, Pacific salmon and bald eagles. Bellinger also led a successful research program about visitor impacts on bear populations.

Sharon Ware, a refuge operations specialist at Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts and an 11-year Fish and Wildlife Service employee, was presented the Refuge Employee of the Year Award.

Since 1991, Ware has been the only full-time, permanent employee at Monomoy, where she handled public recreation, wildlife management, facility maintenance, boat operation and public relations issues and activities. She helped establish the community partnership group known as Friends of Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge, recruited several student interns to help conduct vital refuge programs, and coordinated the Monomoy Avian Diversity Restoration Project for threatened piping plovers and other native nesting birds. She also served as the primary spokesperson for the highly visible bird restoration program, handling community and media relations as well as contact with elected officials.

Molly Krival, president of the J.N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, received the Refuge Volunteer of the Year Award.

Since 1988, Krival has led the community partnership to support the J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida, one of the most-visited refuges in the country. Krival led efforts to recruit and train volunteers for refuge visitor programs such as birding tours and environmental education, was influential in refuge land acquisition programs, and raised funds for a major new environmental education center at the refuge. More recently, Krival helped foster the Fish and Wildlife Service's Friends Initiative, a nationwide program to strengthen and increase community partnerships for refuges. She continues to support the effort by serving as a mentor to jump-start these programs at other refuges.

The group known as **Friends of Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge** received an award for forming an outstanding community partnership with the refuge.

The group was honored for its advocacy, which led to the establishment of the refuge more than 25 years ago, and its continued efforts to inform the community about lower Minnesota River valley natural resource issues. The group also raised funds for refuge land acquisitions, as well as for a state-of-the-art refuge visitor center well-known for its outstanding interpretive displays and exhibits. The group works with owners of lands surrounding the refuge and strongly supports the Service's national Friends Initiative to increase and strengthen refuge community partnerships.

The National Wildlife Refuge Awards are supported by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Audubon Society.

Partnerships and Individual Efforts Are Key to Migratory Bird Conservation

Seven individuals whose contributions help conserve migratory birds received Partners In Flight (PIF) Awards at the March 21 ceremony. PIF is a consortium of hundreds of organizations, natural resource agencies, businesses, industry associations, private landowners, foundations, universities, and individual citizens dedicated to maintaining healthy bird populations in the United States and throughout the Western Hemisphere. Award recipients are:

James Cox of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, who received a PIF Investigations Award for his innovative work to establish Project Bunting Watch and for helping fill gaps in Florida's Wildlife Habitat Conservation System. He also implemented a new migration monitoring program that provides a view of the magnitude, direction, and timing of peak passages for neotropical migrants on a region-wide scale.

Joe Keepers of the John G. and Marie Stella Kenedy Memorial Foundation in Sarita, Texas, who received a PIF Stewardship Award for his work as land manager at the Kenedy Ranch. Keepers maintained grasslands and oak woodlands of the Tamaulipan Coastal Prairie in excellent condition while developing nature tourism in a traditional ranch setting. He demonstrated that proper land management can provide for bird conservation and economic income.

David S. Lee of the North Carolina State Museum, who received a PIF Investigations Award for his winter bird studies and monitoring workshops in the Bahamas, which stimulated significant new information about the endemic and migratory birds of the northern pine islands. He is credited with creating a link between the conservation of resident and migratory species, which is critical to the success of bird conservation efforts outside the United States.

Madge Lindsay of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, who received the PIF Public Awareness Award. Lindsay was instrumental in the success of the Great Texas Birding Trail and the Great Texas Birding Classic and served as project leader on the Governor's State Task Force on Texas Nature Tourism. These efforts brought together a diverse coalition of political, civic, business, and conservation leaders to help stem the loss of migratory birds.

Gary Myers, director of the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, who received a Leadership Award for his efforts in bird conservation at the regional, national, and international levels. He used his vast field and administrative experience to encourage and guide conservation efforts in the lower Mississippi River alluvial valley.

Mike Staten of Anderson-Tully Co. in Memphis, Tennessee, who received a PIF Stewardship Award for his work to integrate PIF objectives with traditional game and timber objectives on industry lands in the Mississippi River alluvial valley. He provided assistance to foresters and silviculturalists to help them achieve their timber-cutting objectives while conserving forest birds.

Emily Jo "E.J." Williams of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, who received a PIF Leadership Award for her work in research, management, monitoring, international relations, and outreach and education. She helped bring about active involvement from dozens of diverse partners in the Georgia State Working Group. She also has a deep understanding of land management practices and considerable ability in implementing these practices on the ground.

The Partners in Flight awards were sponsored by Birder's World Magazine and editor Eldon Greij.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service's 94 million acres include 512 national wildlife refuges, 65 national fish hatcheries, 38 wetland management districts with waterfowl production areas, 78 ecological services field stations, and 50 wildlife coordination areas.

The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, administers the Endangered Species Act, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes Federal excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state wildlife agencies. This program is a cornerstone of the Nation's wildlife management efforts, funding fish and wildlife restoration, boating access, hunter education, shooting ranges, and related projects across America.